

# Trans Canada Train Trip

Not long after my retirement in 1988 Mary and I decided to splurge a bit on a Trans Canada trip. It was a package deal which included meals, lodging and transportation.

We flew from Philadelphia to Bellingham, Washington and found surface transportation from there to the beginning point of the tour in Vancouver, British Columbia. After checking in to the hotel provided by the tour we found a delightful restaurant for dinner. It was impressive to be enjoying a good meal at or near sea level as we could look at the lights high up on a mountain where people were skiing.

In the afternoon of the next day we met our travelling companions and the pleasant, competent hostess who would be with us for the entire trip. She took us on a bus to the Canadian Pacific Railway station where we boarded the train. Our compartment was small but comfortable. Early in the evening we began the rather long, steep climb into the Canadian Rockies.

We spent much of the next morning in one of the observation cars, spell-bound by the spectacular scenery. Toward the end of the day we entered Banff National Park and left the train in the town of Banff, Alberta and checked in to a hotel. We spent two days on our own exploring the charming town of Banff and the surrounding area. Lake Louise was one of the numerous unforgettable sites that we visited.

Then it was back on the train for the ride down the eastern slope of the Rockies to the vast, flat plains of the interior. It was there that an unscheduled event was permanently etched into our memories. About 3:00 AM we were awakened by vigorous pounding on our compartment door and told that we must immediately evacuate the train. We grabbed a couple blankets and were herded out onto the platform of a closed railway station. A sign on the station identified it as Swift Current, Saskatchewan. After shivering for about an hour we were permitted to get back on the train. The railway was having some labor problems, and there had been a bomb threat.

After that we relished the peaceful experience of passing through the remainder of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The occasional farm houses we saw were a considerable distance from the train. Passing through some of the small towns it appeared that most of the residents had come to see the train go by. Mail may have been the attraction. Without slowing down the incoming mail was dropped off and the outgoing was captured.

At Toronto we switched to a bus for the remainder of the trip to Quebec City, Quebec. We discovered that some of the residents were unable or unwilling to speak English. My French vocabulary was very limited, but we enjoyed the experience. On the return to Toronto we spent a night in a hotel in Montreal. I had access to a computer and decided to check my email. I quickly discovered that the computer keyboards for French and English are significantly different. My email would be waiting for me when we got home. *C'est la vie!*

Back in Toronto we were happy to board a flight to Philadelphia. It was a great trip, but we were ready to go home.